#4
MARVEL
DAVID
BAGLEY
DELL
KEITH
BEN REILLY:
THE SCARLET SPIDER
BALE!!
HENNESSY

Years ago, Miles Warren, one of Peter Parker's college professors, stole a sample of Peter's genetic material and used it to create a perfect clone of Spider-Man. With all of Peter's memories, the clone fled. Created, not born, and without an identity of his own, he gave himself a new name and made his own way in the world as...

BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER

After a misguided stint as a villain, Ben's attempt to get back on his feet has led him to Las Vegas and into uneasy partnership with Cassandra Mercury, Casino owner and mother of one of Ben's NEW U patients.

Meanwhile, Kaine has been tracking Ben, hoping to bring him to justice for his crimes as the Jackal.

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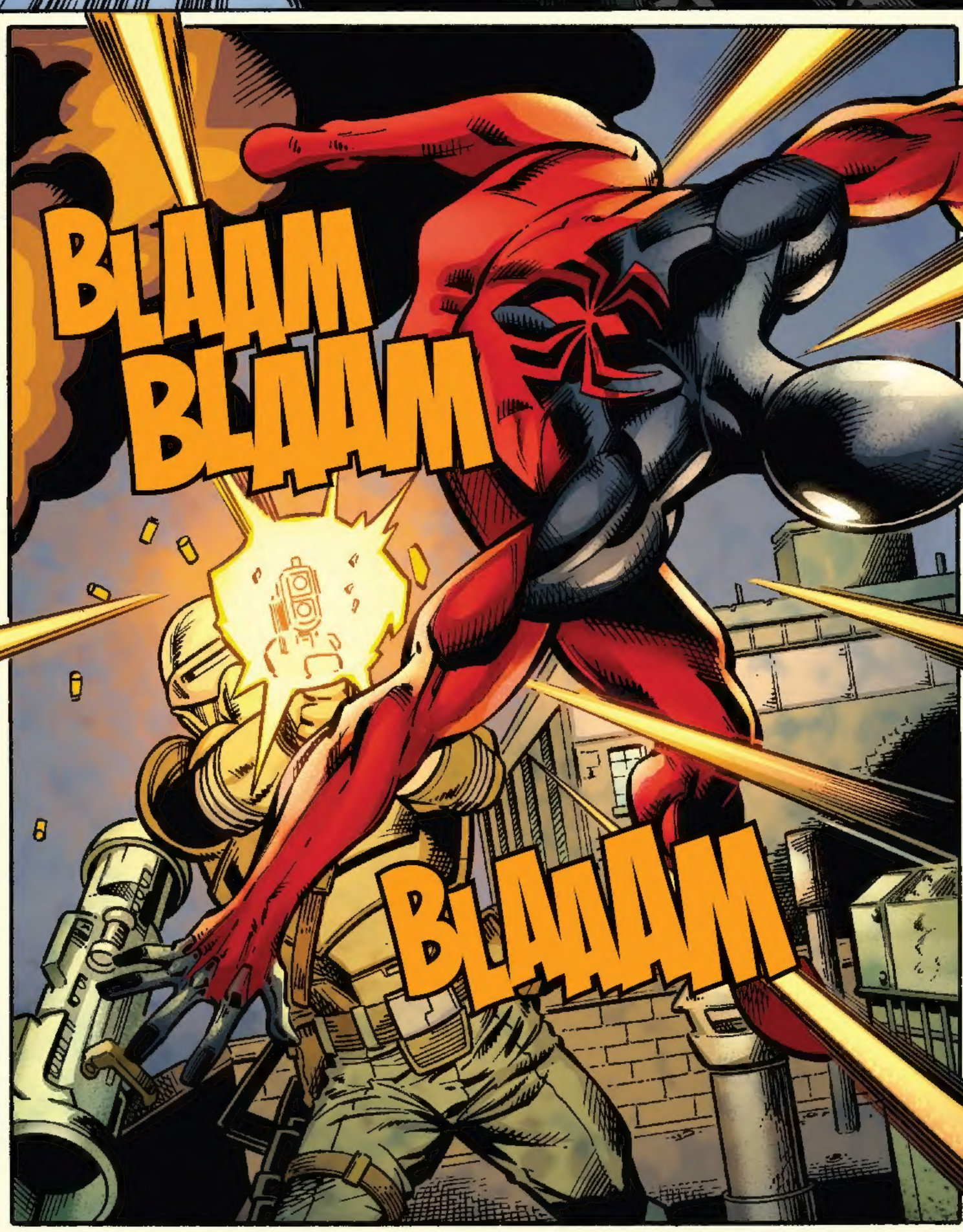
RITA?
WHY SO SILENT, DR. CLARKSON?
UH-OH.
SHE'S GONE. ALL RIGHT. THIS HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE BAD.
CRAP. WHAT'S THAT FLASH OF--
KRAAASH!
--LIGHT?!

RÖLLIÄCIÜN
STANG'S WAREHOUSE
NICE SHOT.
YEAH, WELL, WITH AN NLAW, EVEN A NEAR MISS IS AS GOOD AS A HIT.
THINK WE GOT HIM?
NO WAY HE SURVIVED *THAT!* WE'RE GOOD TO GO.

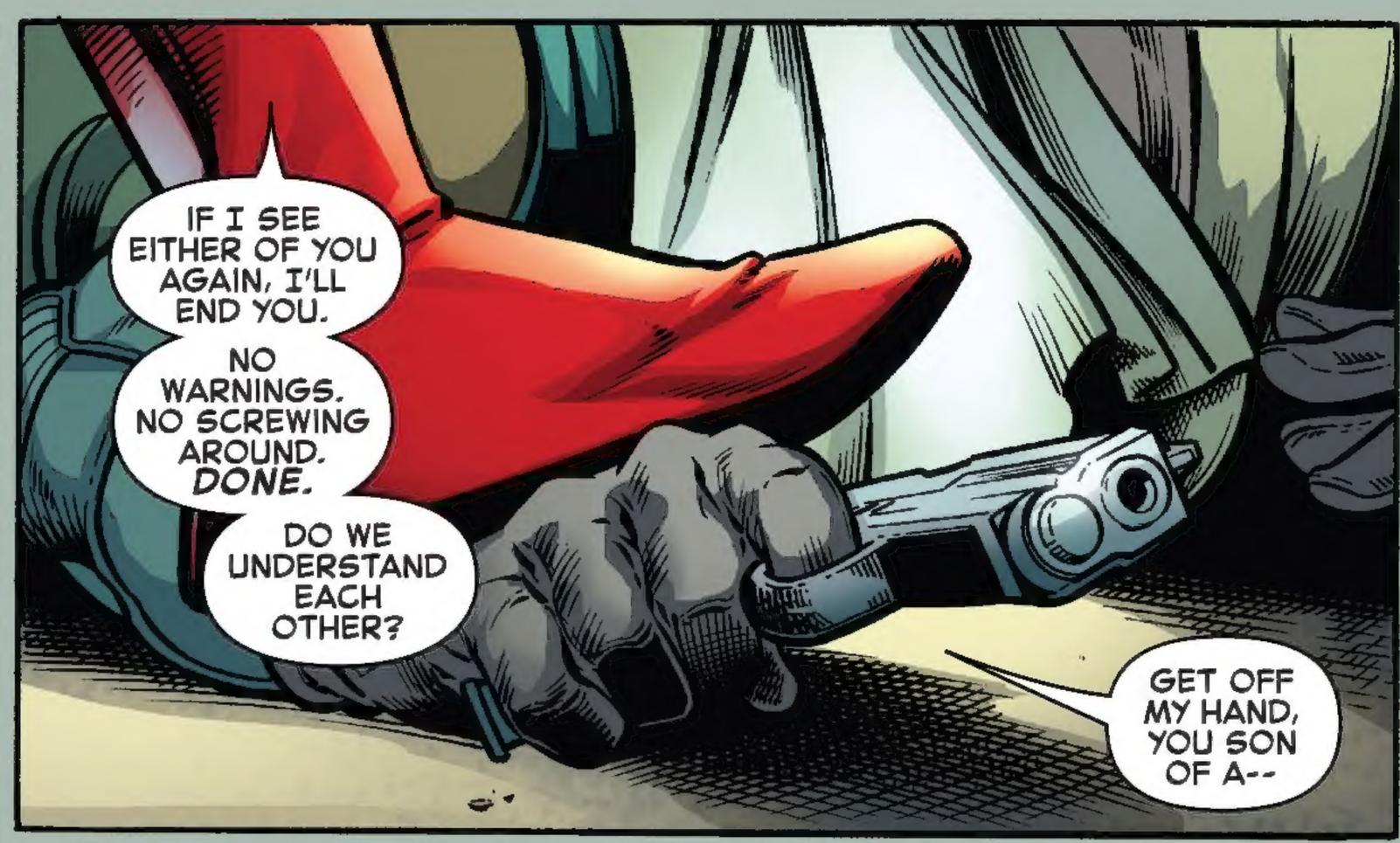
BOO.

WAAAAM
OOOOF!
TARGET IS *LIVE!* REQUESTING BACKUP!


BLAAM
BLAAM
BLAAAM

UNHHH!

NOW LISTEN CAREFULLY.

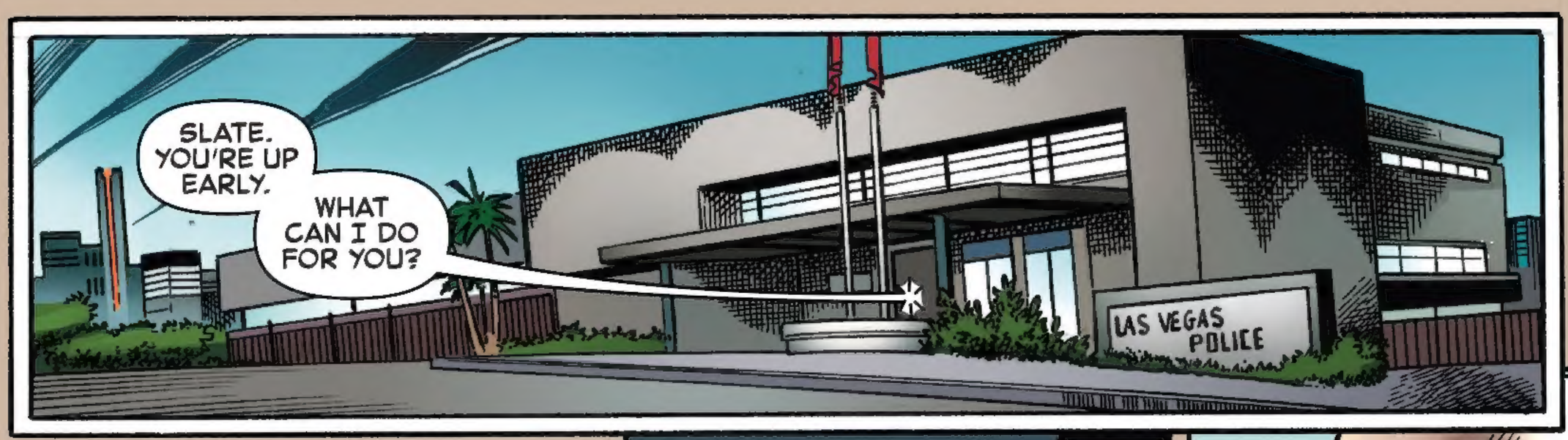

IF I SEE EITHER OF YOU AGAIN, I'LL END YOU.
NO WARNINGS. NO SCREWING AROUND. DONE.
DO WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER?
GET OFF MY HAND, YOU SON OF A--

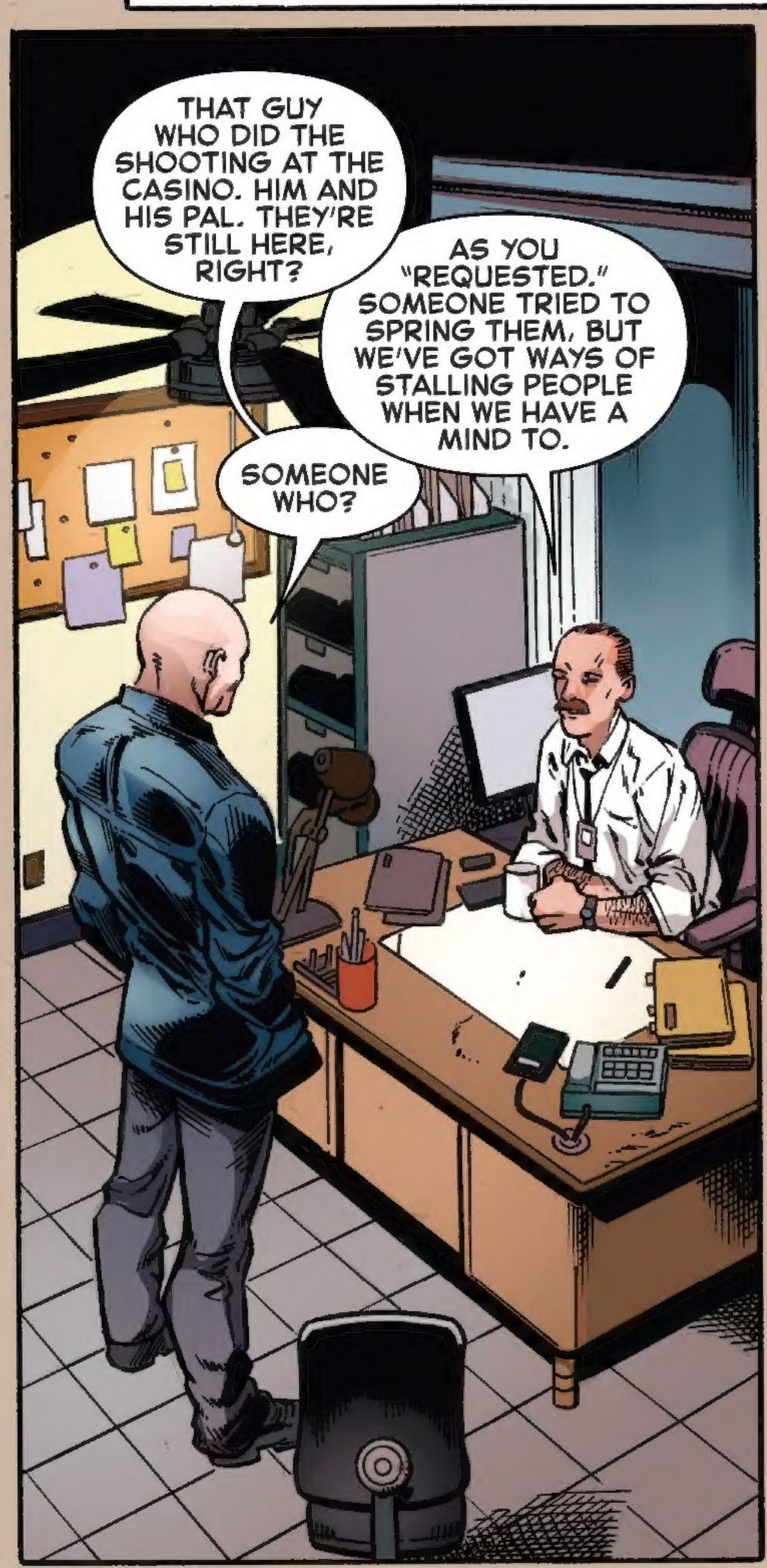
KRAAAAK
ARRRRRHHH!

I SAID, DO WE UN--
YES! YES! I UNDERSTAND! I UNDERSTAND!

KRUNK

GOOD.


SLATE. YOU'RE UP EARLY.
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
LAS VEGAS POLICE

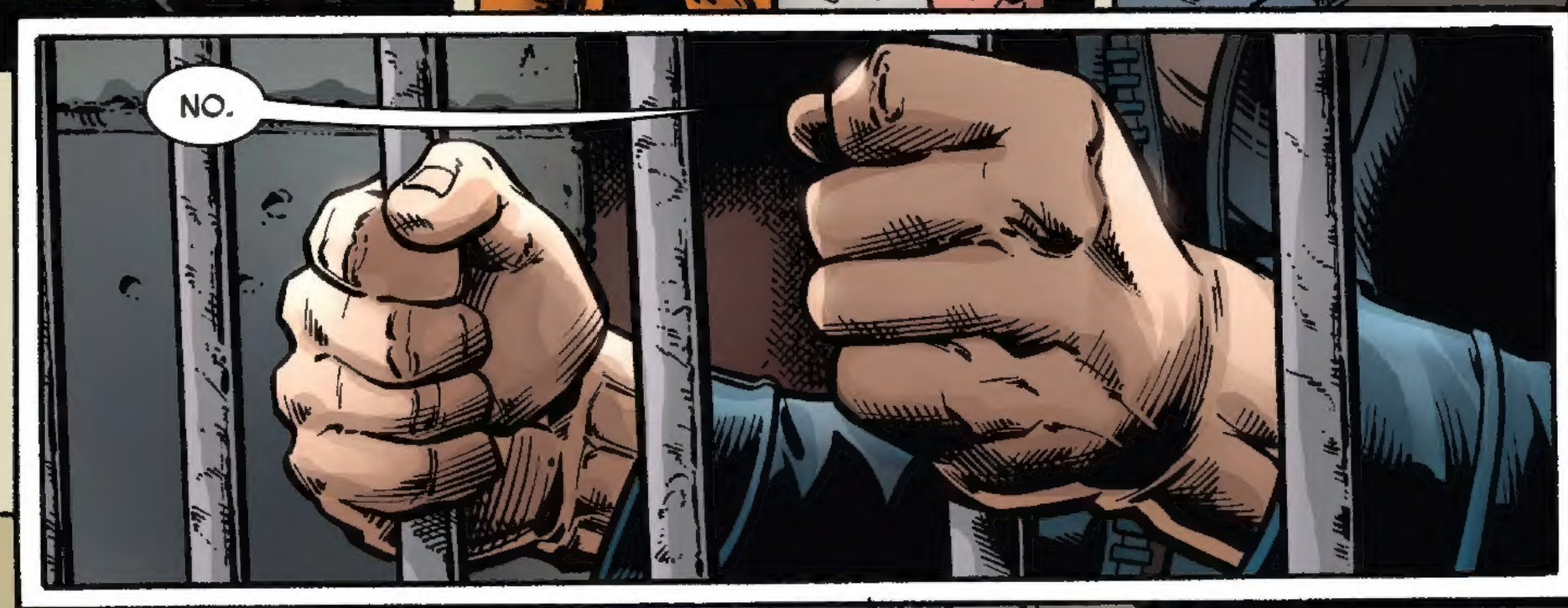

THAT GUY WHO DID THE SHOOTING AT THE CASINO. HIM AND HIS PAL. THEY'RE STILL HERE, RIGHT?
AS YOU "REQUESTED." SOMEONE TRIED TO SPRING THEM, BUT WE'VE GOT WAYS OF STALLING PEOPLE WHEN WE HAVE A MIND TO.
SOMEONE WHO?

NO IDEA. A REP OF A REP.
YOU WANT TO SEE HIM, I ASSUME. ALONE.
YOU COULD SAY THAT.
HE DIDN'T TELL US A THING. WE GRILLED HIM FOR A WHILE.

I HAVE A WAY WITH PEOPLE.
BY THE WAY, BLANCHER, YOU LEFT THESE CHIPS LAST TIME YOU CAME BY.
DID I?

HEH. I GUESS I MUST'VE.
CHARLIE!
YEAH?
ESCORT MR. SLATE TO HOLDING CELL B36, PLEASE. AND THEN WALK AWAY.

WALK AWAY?
YEAH.
OOOKAY.

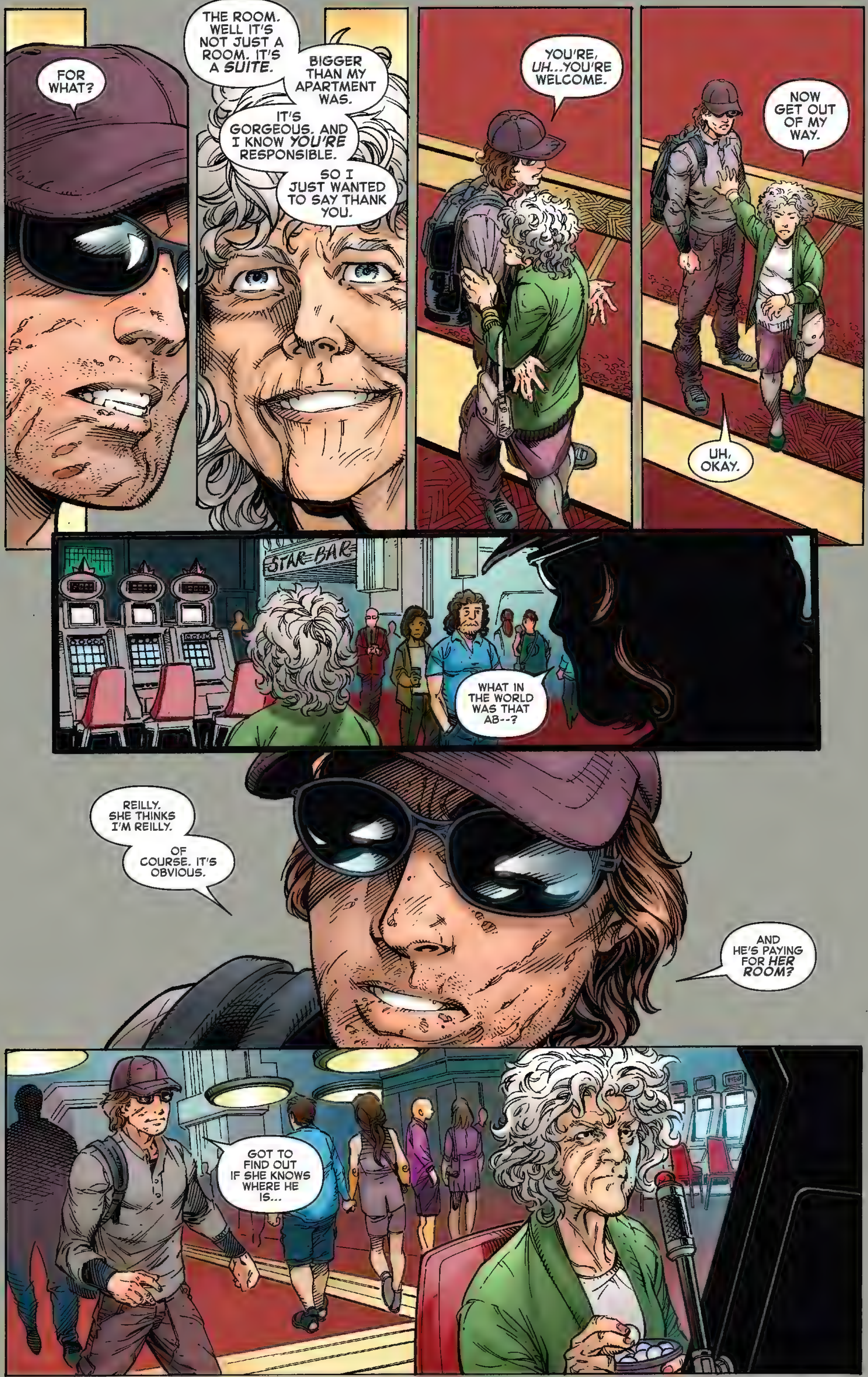


KRAAAANG

I'M NOT.

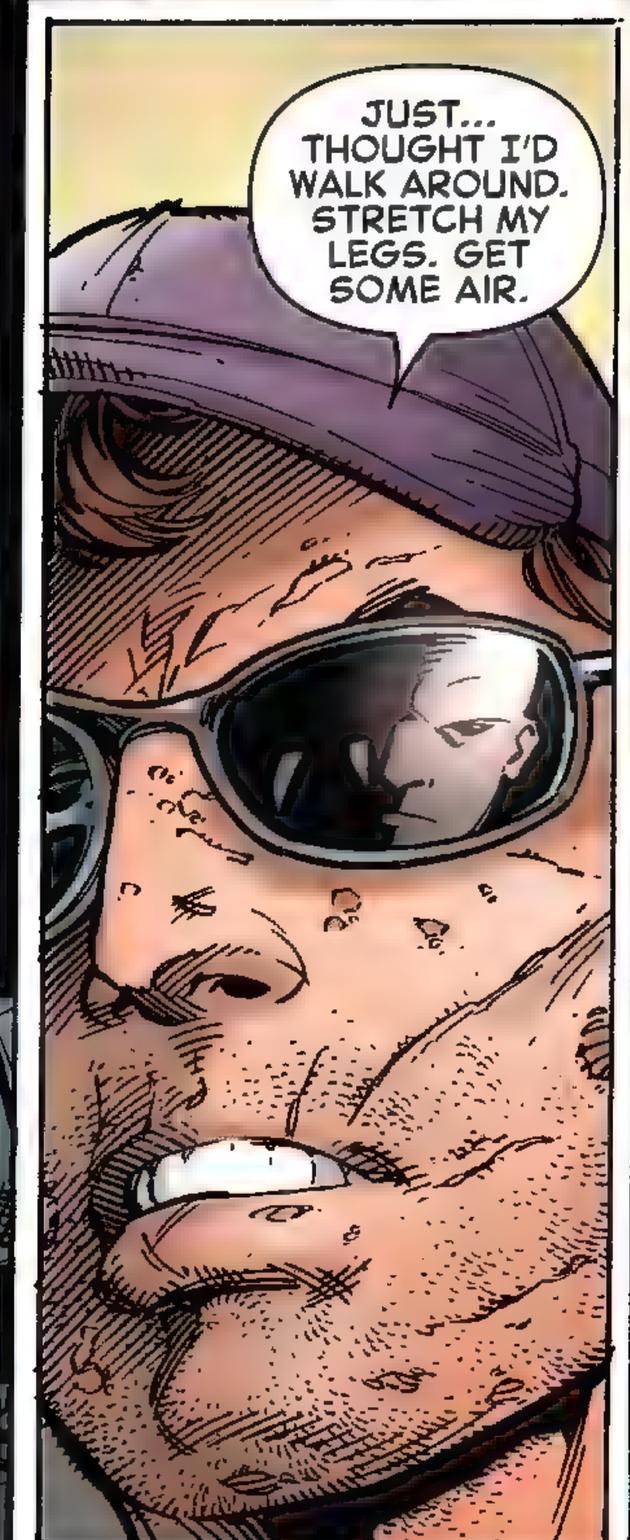
NOW ANSWER TRUTHFULLY, OR I WILL KILL YOU, RIP YOUR HEAD OFF, AND HEAD DOWN THE HALL TO SHOW IT TO YOUR FRIEND...
...WHO I SUSPECT WILL BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO TELL ME WHAT I WANT TO KNOW.
KRAK
YAARHHH!
WELL, THAT WAS AMUSING.
FIVE SECONDS TO TELL ME.
FOUR...
...THREE...
ALL RIGHT!
GOOD CHOICE.

THERE IT IS: MERCURY RISING. RESIDENCE OF CASSANDRA MERCURY. RICH AS CROESUS...
...AND THE WOMAN WHO HIRED REILLY TO CURE HER DAUGHTER, ABIGAIL.
IF BEN DID COME TO VEGAS, THIS WOULD'VE BEEN HIS FIRST STOP.
WHAT THE HELL IS HE DOING WALKING AROUND? HE THINKS HE CAN JUST COME AND GO AS HE PLEASES?
AMAZING. FIRST THING IN THE MORNING AND THE PLACE IS ALREADY JUMPING.
A COMBINED TESTAMENT TO THE ETERNAL AMERICAN DREAM...
...AND THE OBLIVIOUSNESS WITH WHICH PEOPLE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THEY CAN WIN FORTUNES IN A SYSTEM RIGGED AGAINST THEM.
UH... YES? CAN I HELP YOU?
I'M GOING TO SAY THIS ONCE AND ONLY ONCE.
THANK YOU.


FOR WHAT?
THE ROOM. WELL IT'S NOT JUST A ROOM. IT'S A SUITE.
BIGGER THAN MY APARTMENT WAS.
IT'S GORGEOUS. AND I KNOW YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE.
SO I JUST WANTED TO SAY THANK YOU.
YOU'RE, UH...YOU'RE WELCOME.
NOW GET OUT OF MY WAY.
UH, OKAY.
STAR-BAR
WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS THAT AB--?
REILLY. SHE THINKS I'M REILLY.
OF COURSE. IT'S OBVIOUS.
AND HE'S PAYING FOR HER ROOM?
GOT TO FIND OUT IF SHE KNOWS WHERE HE IS...

WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?

WHY THE HELL AREN'T YOU UPSTAIRS RESEARCHING?
I...


JUST... THOUGHT I'D WALK AROUND. STRETCH MY LEGS. GET SOME AIR.

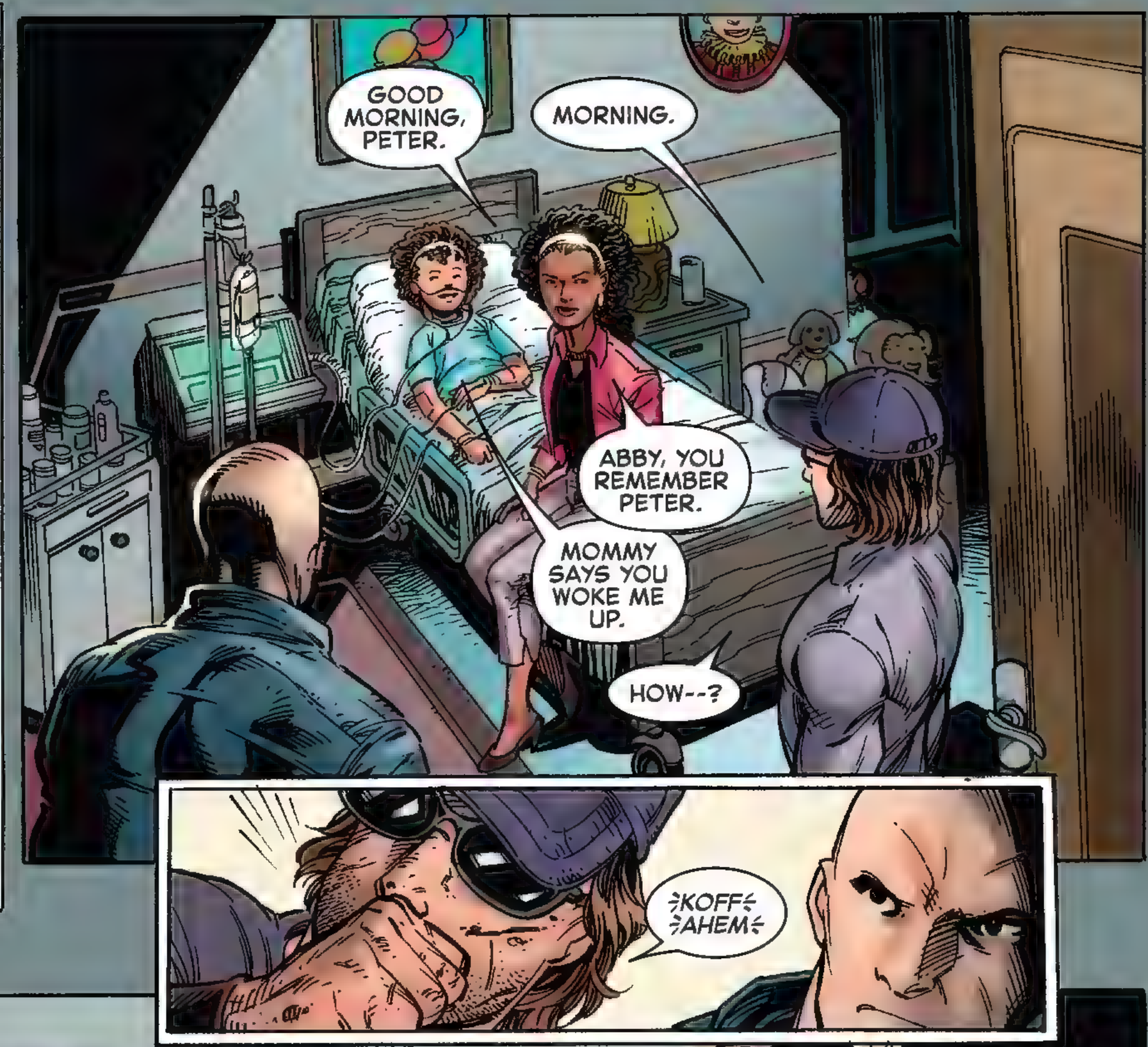
YOUR LEGS LOOK STRETCHED ENOUGH TO ME.
COME ON. LET'S GET YOU BACK UPSTAIRS.
OF COURSE. ABSOLUTELY.

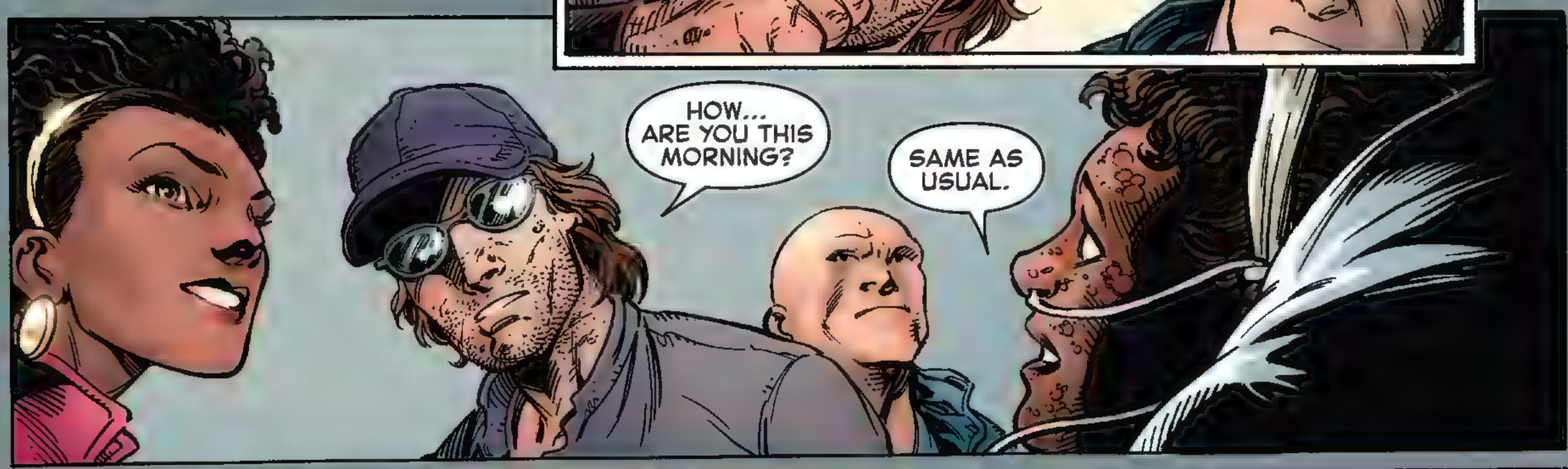
IS MS. MERCURY AROUND? I'D LIKE TO SPEAK WITH HER.
HAVE YOU CURED ABIGAIL?
NO. NOT YET.

THEN THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN SAY THAT WILL BE OF THE SLIGHTEST INTEREST TO HER.
I SUPPOSE NOT.

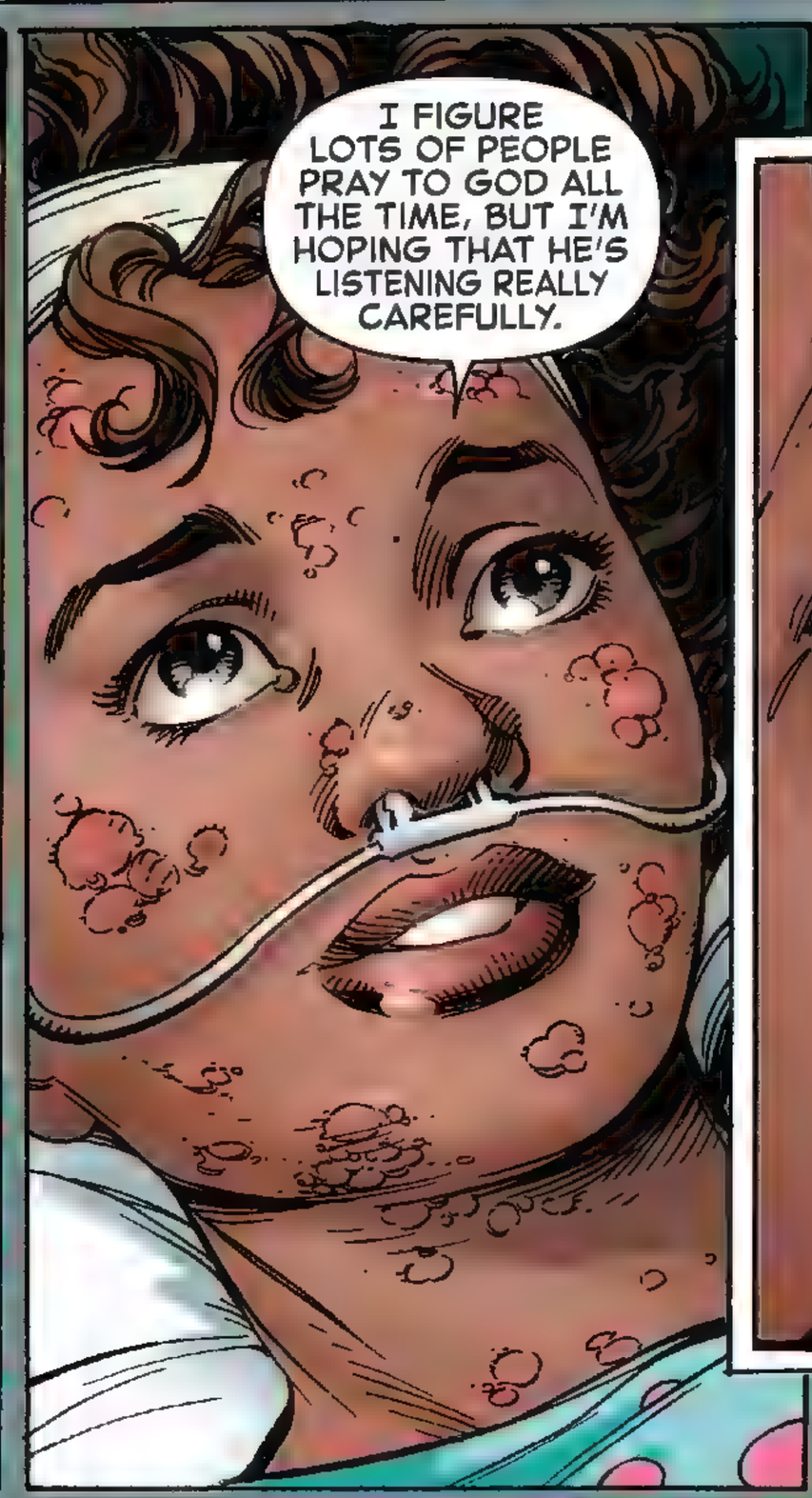
UPSIDE INSIDE OUT!
I THINK YOUR CELL PHONE IS RINGING.
I KNOW.
SHE'LL PUSH AND PULL YOU DOWN!
"LIVIN' LA VIDA LOCA"? REALLY?
SHUT UP.
THIS IS SLATE.
YEAH, DIVA. I'M IN THE BUILDING RIGHT NOW.
I'M ALREADY ON MY WAY. FOUND PETER SNOOPING AROUND THE LOBBY.
SO SINCE WE'LL BE SEEING HER ANYWAY...
YOU START A CONVERSATION WITH CASSANDRA MERCURY AND I'LL BREAK YOUR ARM. AND TRUST ME, IT WON'T BE THE FIRST BONE I'VE SHATTERED TODAY.
I WOULD IMAGINE.
IS "SLATE" YOUR REAL NAME?
WHY THE HELL DO YOU CARE?
JUST MAKING CONVERSATION. HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED FOR MS. MERCURY?
SHUT UP.
UNFFF...
OKAY.

DIVA?
YES, COME IN, SLATE.


GOOD MORNING, PETER.
MORNING.
ABBY, YOU REMEMBER PETER.
MOMMY SAYS YOU WOKE ME UP.
HOW--?
KOFF AHEM


HOW... ARE YOU THIS MORNING?
SAME AS USUAL.

YES, BUT WE'RE HOPING FOR IMPROVEMENT SOMETIME SOON.
I'M PRAYING EVERY DAY.


I FIGURE LOTS OF PEOPLE PRAY TO GOD ALL THE TIME, BUT I'M HOPING THAT HE'S LISTENING REALLY CAREFULLY.

I'M SURE HE IS, HONEY. IN FACT, I'M POSITIVE.
RIGHT, PETER?
RIGHT.

SHE'S A VERY SWEET CHILD.

OH, SHE'S THE BEST. SHE'S THE ONE THING IN THIS WORLD HER MOTHER LOVES. MAYBE EVER LOVED.

AND SHE'S DYING. SHE KNOWS IT. SHE'S NOT STUPID.

BUT SHE'S NOT AFRAID OF IT. NOT IN THE LEAST. INSTEAD, ALL SHE WORRIES ABOUT IS WHAT HER DEATH WILL DO TO HER MOTHER.

AND NOT WITHOUT REASON.

IF THAT CHILD DIES...

IT WILL NOT GO VERY WELL FOR SOME FOLKS.

YOU UNDERSTAND.

SURE.

SO GET IN THERE.

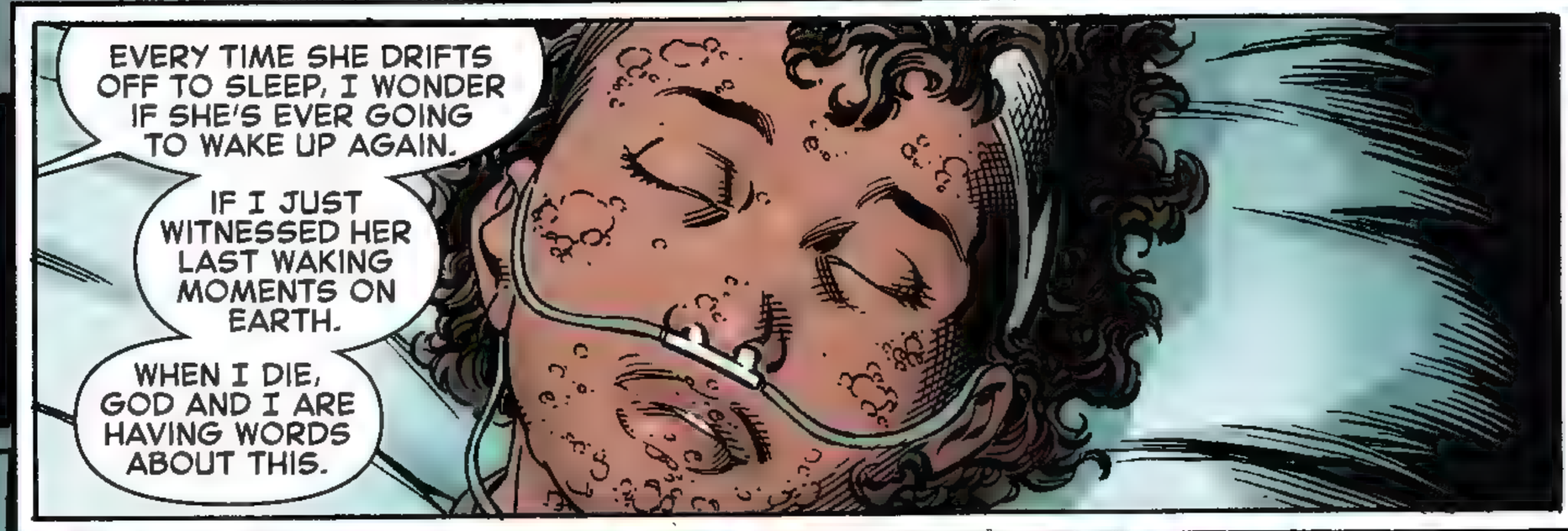
RIGHT. YES. ABSOLUTELY.

GOOD TALKING TO YOU.

YEAH. SURE.

WHAT THE HELL?
IS BEN ACTUALLY LIVING HERE AND TRYING TO CURE THAT GIRL? FOR REAL?
IT'S A SCAM. IT HAS TO BE A SCAM.
OF COURSE. CONVINCE HER THAT HE'S GOING TO REALLY CURE THE GIRL THIS TIME...
...THEN KILL HER AND REPLACE HER WITH ANOTHER CLONE. RAKE IN A HUGE PAYDAY.
THAT HAS TO BE IT.
DON'T KNOW WHERE HE IS AT THE MOMENT, BUT LET'S SEE WHAT HE'S BEEN UP TO.
DAMMIT. IT'S PASSWORD PROTECTED.
PARKER?
TAK TAK TAK
NO.
TAK TAK TAK
JACKAL?
TAK TAK
NO.
AUNTMAY? UNCLEBEN? BENPARKER? MAYPARKER? GWENSTACY? FORESTHILLS?
DAMMIT. NONE OF THEM ARE GETTING THROUGH. WHAT POSSIBLE--?
TAK TAK TAK
KAINE.

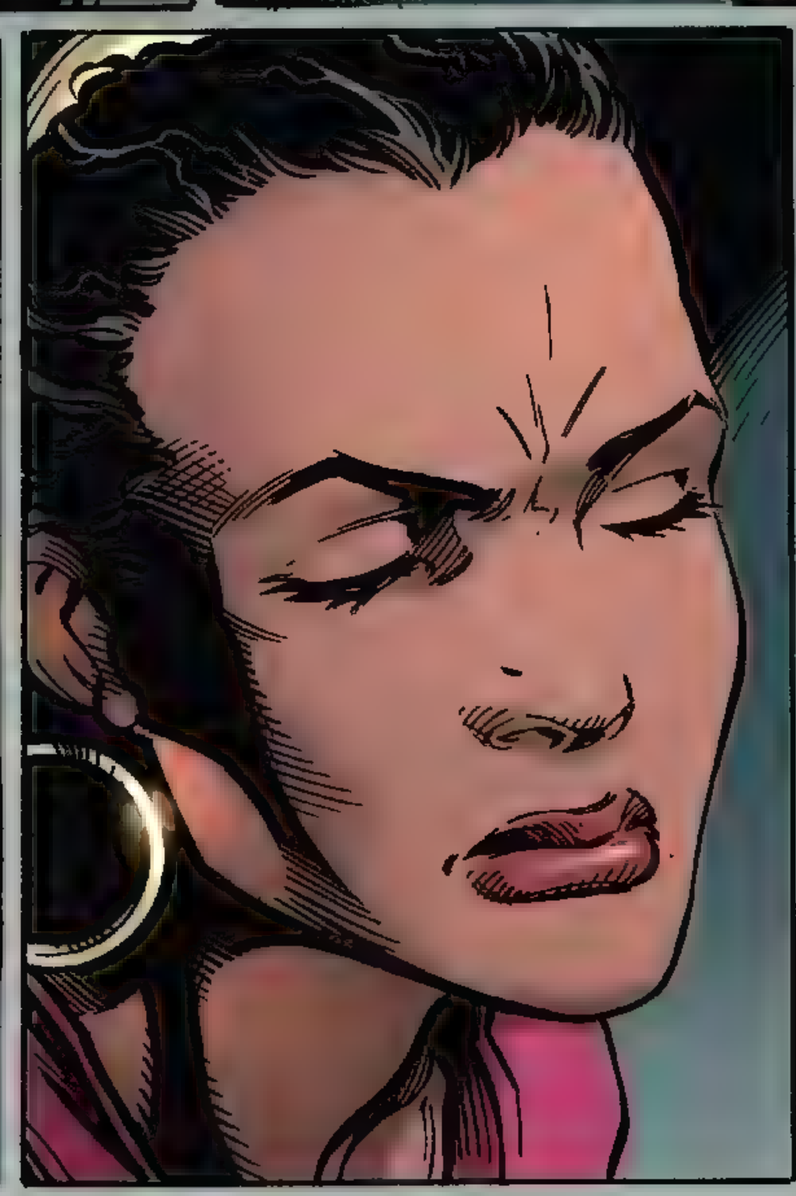
IT'S "KAINE."
K-A-I-N-E.
WHAT CAN I SAY? I'M A SUCKER FOR SENTIMENT.
YOU WANT SOME COFFEE? I CAN MAKE A FRESH POT.


EVERY TIME SHE DRIFTS OFF TO SLEEP, I WONDER IF SHE'S EVER GOING TO WAKE UP AGAIN.
IF I JUST WITNESSED HER LAST WAKING MOMENTS ON EARTH.
WHEN I DIE, GOD AND I ARE HAVING WORDS ABOUT THIS.

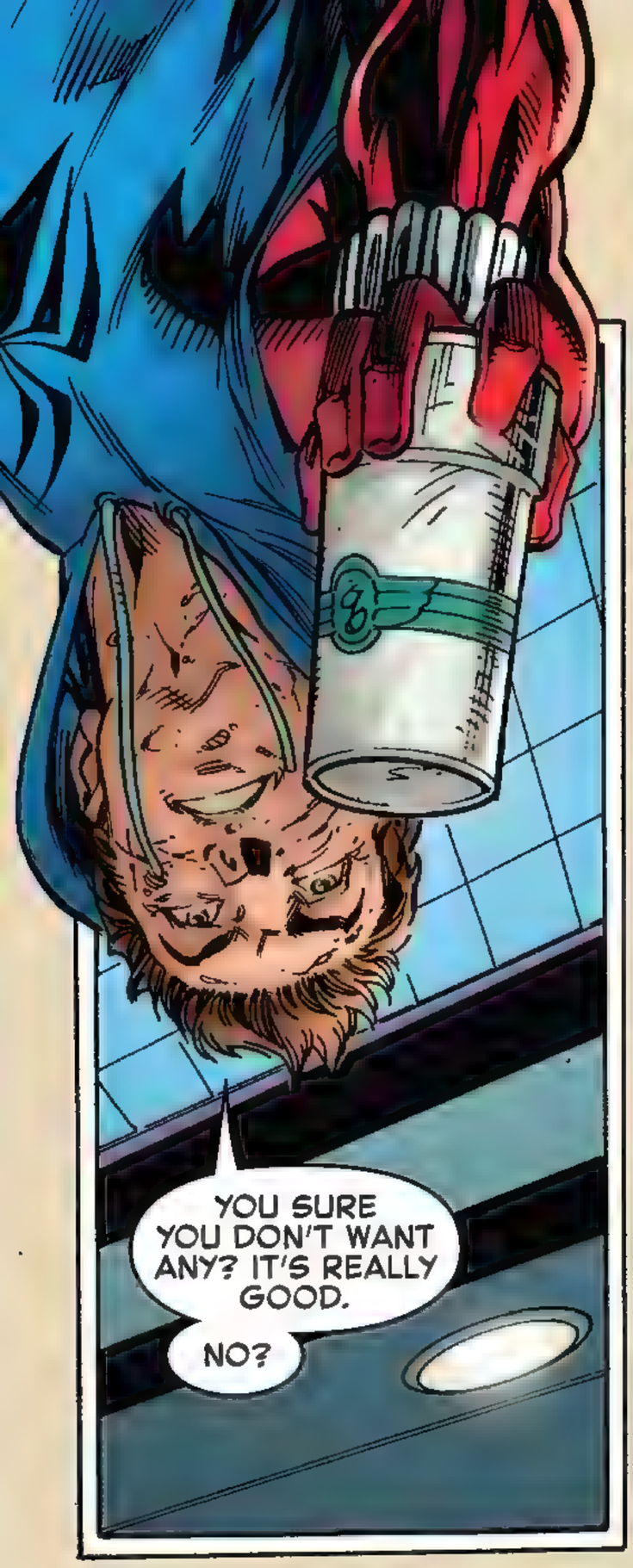
DON'T TAKE THIS THE WRONG WAY, DIVA, BUT DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU'LL WIND UP ON THE BIG GUY'S SIDE OF THE STREET?
IF NOT, I'M GOING TO WIND UP TAKING OVER HELL AND MAKE HIM COME DOWN TO FACE ME.
I HAVE NO DOUBT.

HOW DID THINGS GO AT THE POLICE STATION?
YOU WERE RIGHT. SOMEONE HIRED THE GUNMEN TO BUST IN HERE AND DO THE ROBBERY.
I KNEW IT. DO YOU HAVE A NAME FOR ME?
I DO. BUT YOU'RE NOT GONNA LIKE IT.
THAT GOES WITHOUT SAYING. BUT WHOEVER IT IS IS GOING TO LIKE IT EVEN LESS. SO WHO IS IT?

THORNE.



DAMMIT.


YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT ANY? IT'S REALLY GOOD.
NO?

FINE. MORE FOR ME.

SO YOU GOT PAST THE KILL CREW.
YES.
AND NOW YOU'VE COME FOR ME.
YES.
JUST GONNA KILL ME, ARE YOU?
YES.

CAN WE TAKE A MOMENT TO REMEMBER OUR ORIGINS? THE MAN WHOM WE'RE BOTH A CLONE OF?
DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT *PETER PARKER* WOULD JUST WALK IN AND ANNOUNCE HIS INTENT TO KILL SOMEBODY?

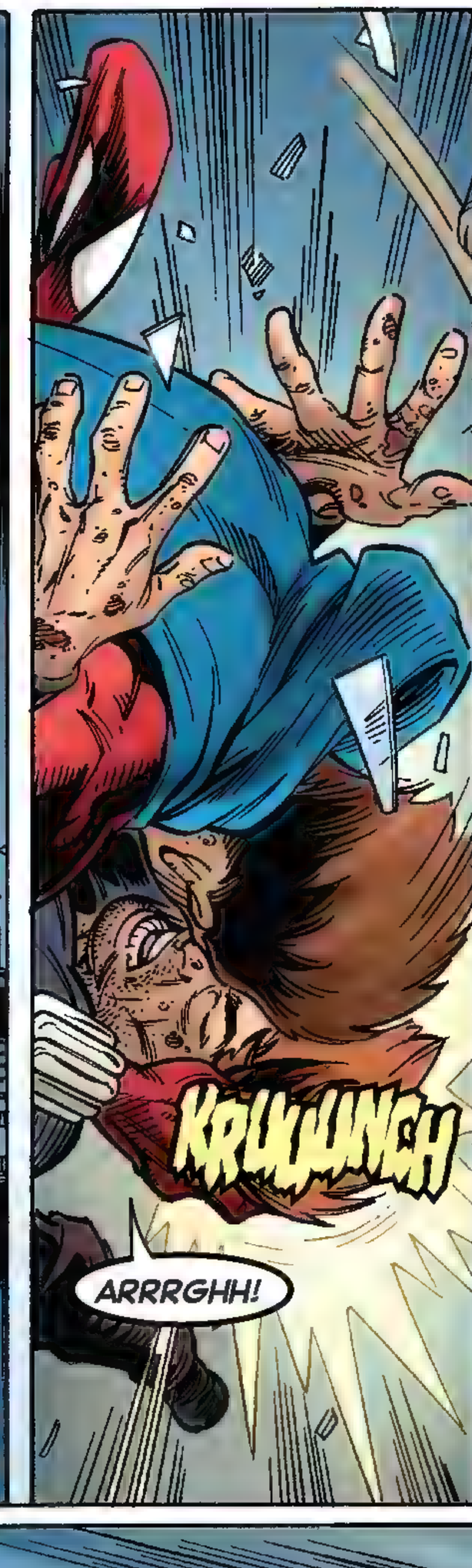
ESPECIALLY WHEN IT'S SOMEONE WHO HAD NO CRIMINAL INTENT, WHO SIMPLY DESIRED TO IMPROVE PEOPLES' LIVES BY GIVING THEM WHAT THEY WANTED?
THEIR MOST BELOVED FRIENDS, RELATIVES, WHATEVER.
THAT'S ALL I WANTED TO DO, KAINE. MAKE PEOPLE HAPPY.

TELL YOU WHAT: START THE COMPUTER UP. THERE'S AN OLD POWERPOINT PRESENT--

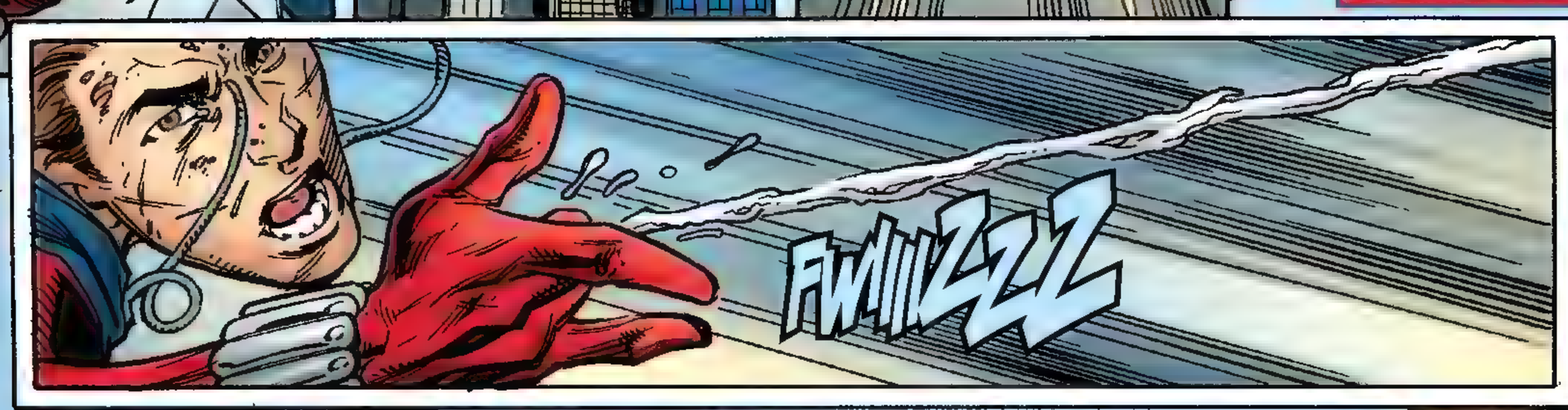
NYAAAARRHHH!
BOOOOFF!
KRAAAAAASH

OKAY. KAINE'S CLEARLY PISSED.
WAM
WAM
WAM

TIME FOR A DIFFERENT APPROACH.


KRUUUNCH
ARRRGHH!

WELL, AT LEAST THAT WORKED.


FWIIIZZZZ

THE QUESTION IS NOW WHAT?
THE FIRST ANSWER IS OBVIOUS.

NO JACKAL COSTUME?
I'M NOT THE JACKAL ANYMORE, KAINE. I'M THE SCARLET SPIDER.
NO, BEN.
I AM.
YOU WANNA GO?
FINE.
LET'S GO!
TO BE CONTINUED!

SCARLET LETTERS

Send e-mail to SPIDEYOFFICE@MARVEL.COM (please mark as "OKAY TO PRINT")
Letters c/o Spider-Office 135 West 50th Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10020

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Hello, CloneHeads! Spider-Office Associate Editor Devin Lewis reporting to you live and in print from Marvel HQ in the heart of New York!

As I type this, we're feverishly working away to make you the best comics mags in the biz, but we wanted to take a break from the business to answer some of your letters.

In the past couple of weeks, we've gotten a lot of fan mail from you readers out there in Mighty Marveldom about the return of Ben Reilly, the original Scarlet Spider!

What did you fans have to say? Words of praise?! Harsh criticisms?! READ ON AND FIND OUT, TRUE BELIEVER!

Just finished issue #2 of BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER. I love it so far. "The Clone Conspiracy" was an amazing story, and I was disappointed Prowler didn't last longer after it ended, but now seeing Ben Reilly's story is fascinating. The story is emotional and comedic at the same time! Keep up the good work!

Bill

Hi, Bill! Thanks for your letter, and thanks for reading! Always love hearing that fans are enjoying what we're doing in the pages of our funny books! Keep THWIPin'!

Hi Spider-Office,

I want to thank you for all your efforts in bringing Ben Reilly back into the Marvel fold. I am well aware he was such a contentious character for many people, but I wanted to share with you why he was so important to me in the 1990s, and my hopes for him going forward.

What fascinated me about Ben was that he was, for all intents and purposes, Spider-Man—the same powers, the same sense of responsibility, but in addition to this he had "none of the perks." He had to live his life in Peter's shadow and accept that the only reason he wasn't living Spidey's life was because the other guy literally got there first. I think that is something we all relate to—opportunities we've missed because somebody just like us has beaten us to the punch. The one who is the bridesmaid, but never the bride.

Ben's story arc as the Scarlet Spider for me was about how human beings move on from such a scenario. How we step out from the shadows, let go of the baggage of the past and craft ourselves into someone new—someone who is no longer defined solely by a role model or a forerunner... but a more complete, rounded individual who is doing what they do because they have claimed their life as their own.

Perhaps one of the things that really endeared me to Ben was his early encounter with Venom, where his spider-sense actually works because his cloning occurred before the symbiote bonded with Peter, and he's left wondering why Peter could ever let Venom roam free because it seems so wrong to him... and then demonstrates this by rejecting the advances of the symbiote after he separates it from Eddie.

It honestly didn't matter to me if Ben was real or clone, because that wasn't the point.

Looking back in hindsight, I think it's possible that pulling the Peter-Ben switch was an early plan to end the Spider-Marriage, but the fans didn't like it. However, I think you have an opportunity to please both sets of fans now... but more of that in a bit.

So, my hopes for the character. I've read both issues of the Ben Reilly run so far and have mixed feelings. This is *not* the Ben I remember and love...but I accept his story starts in a very difficult place for him. In essence, it is like he's on the same track as he was before, but has been pushed backwards millions of miles because of how he has been treated and it causing him to snap.

He's starting from much worse than scratch, not so much square one but square -9,957.

I've seen people go crazy and lose their minds over how a story starts and think, "This is the end. You've ruined the character. The sky is falling", as with the current Captain America arc. However, a story is a journey, and you don't know where you are going to end up from taking just two steps. So, I'm not one of those guys...I'll keep the faith, trust to hope and for now at least enjoy the ride.

Having seen him do it literally, I'd like Ben to rise from the ashes metaphorically. Take the painful steps to reclaim not just his sanity...but also his former identity. See him atone for what he has done and let go of some of the zany props (such as faux May). My hope is that the return to his old costume will, in some ways, be a semiotic indicator of this.

Going even further forward, you could even have Ben devlop feelings for MJ. Admittedly, this will either royally honk off Spider-Marriage fans or please them to no end. I'd probably fall into the latter category.

Anyway, keep up the good work...and I'll keep the faith. Come on, Ben...you can do it. We believe in you.

Nick P.
Alcester, United Kingdom

Hi, Nick! Thanks so much for your letter and for sticking with us for the first two issues, even if you've got some reservations about the story so far!

I'm a big Ben Reilly fan, too (as I'm sure you already know, being the ever-loyal Spider-Fan that you are!), and I'll be honest with you – few moments in comics have broken my heart as much as the entirety of Dan Slott and Giuseppe Camuncoli's epic AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #22, where we learned the awful fate that befell Ben after he sacrificed himself to save Peter from the Green Goblin. Few characters in comics have been put through the emotional wringer like Ben Reilly, and, yes, it pains me too to see Ben making what you or I might consider… morally dubious decisions, but what hurts more is that I can kind of understand why he's doing it.

Peter has some truly beautiful stories planned, and while I can't guarantee that Ben'll be a hero any time soon, I think what Peter is working toward is going to hit you right square in the feels.

SCARLET SPIDER #1 was excellent. I was a fan of Mark Bagley's art back when I read Spider-Man as a kid, so that alone was enough to get me to pick this book up, but the writing was awesome as well. I can't wait to see where this series is going. Keep up the good work.

Cody T

To the best writers on the planet,

The SCARLET SPIDER series is amazing. This is the most creative and hilarious first issue I ever read. Please make Aunt June a character in this entire series. I always loved Ben Reilly. My first Marvel bobble head was of Ben Reilly. I cannot wait for the second issue and I cannot wait for the new Scarlet Spider and Aunt June action figures. This series is one of my favorites. I will buy every issue, and tell all of my friends about it.

Tommy the Marvel Nerd

Only one writer you need to thank, Tommy, and that's industry legend PETER DAVID! Glad you're digging it so far!

I really love Scarlet Spider, and I'm excited to see him back to causing trouble, though I sometimes wonder where his original outfit with his hood came from or who designed him in such a way. So far, I've read the first comic and I'm already loving him thoroughly. Keep up the good work!!!

A. Bond

Hey, A.! Thanks for your letter. HERE'S A FUN PIECE OF MARVEL TRIVA! The Scarlet Spider costume was designed by none other than artist Tom Lyle, who also did a substantive run on the character's solo series…AND (!) we were even lucky enough to get him back on board to do a variant for BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER #1! Keep your eyes peeled—it just might be at your local shop, waiting for you to snatch it up!

That's it for this issue, True Believers! Join us next time, for the Scarlet Spider showdown of the century! DON'T MISS IT!

Over and out!
Devin
@edevinlewis

NEXT:

LET US KNOW HOW WE'RE DOING! DROP US A LINE AT SPIDEYOFFICE@MARVEL.COM!
BE SURE TO MARK IT OKAY TO PRINT!

ZONE